

HISTORICAL SOCIETY 1976-9

A cursory look at the years 1976-9 shows that *The Historical Society*, though growing in age, has remained quite active and is doing its best to live up to its ideals. In 1980, we celebrate our thirtieth birthday and it is sincerely hoped that the executive committee for that year makes this landmark memorable, just as our silver jubilee was well-celebrated in 1975. Perforce, such a celebration would have to be celebrated under a slightly amended name since we have had to drop the word *Malta* to comply with Act No. XXIII of 1978, which came into operation on 1st November, 1978.

As stated in our Statute, the aim of our Society is the study of the History of the Maltese islands and the diffusion of its knowledge. By History is meant History proper and its auxiliary sciences. During the past four years our Society has done its best to further this end.

One must start, of course, with the publication of our journal, *Melita Historica*, which is now in its 28th consecutive year and, with this current number, comprises seven complete volumes. Our journal is acknowledged to be the only completely scientific historical journal being published in our islands. Its high esteem is shown by the number of exchange copies our society has with foreign institutions. One must here point out that the society's aim of compiling an up-to-date bibliography of all publications of local historical interest is also being partly carried out through the publication of a list of *Melitensia* in each copy of our journal since 1977.

Various conducted visits were organised to places of historical interest, including the Cathedral Archives and the Norman House at Mdina, Fort St Elmo, Verdala Palace, the President's Palace and the Church of St Paul Shipwrecked at Valletta, the Zabbar Sanctuary Museum and last, but not least, the Capuchin Library and Museum at Floriana. One must not forget two other very interesting visits, viz., to Vittoriosa and Zejtun. The Vittoriosa visit was a conducted tour of the city including the Collegiate Church Museum and the Inquisitors' Palace whilst the Zejtun visit included the Parish Museum, the old Church of St Gregory and the Roman remains. One must here thank the many people, most of them members of our Society, who willingly guided us on these visits.

Our Society also furthered the aim expressed in the statute to "hold lectures and study circles on Methodology and on items of local History". In 1976, we organised a Seminar on *Architecture and Folklore in History*, which was well-attended, at the Cultural Centre, Floriana. In 1979, our Society

organised a Week of Historical Studies at the Catholic Institute, Floriana, in which papers on "Views on Malta — Changes in the recent Past", "The Confraternities of the Maltese Islands", and "The Correspondence of a Senglea Merchant during the Plague of 1813" were read by Mr. Guido Lanfranco, Mgr. V. Borg and Dr. P. Cassar respectively. There were also three short communications by Dr. G. Wettinger on "A Militia Roster of 1417", by Rev. Fr. J. Azzopardi on "The Importance of the Cathedral Musical Archives" and by Dr. A. Luttrell on "The Genoese and Malta; 1250—1268". The 'Week' was rounded up by a half-day seminar on "The Fortifications of Malta". The speakers were architects M. Ellul and D. de Lucca, Mr. R. Vella Bonavita and Brigadier A Samut-Tagliaferro who spoke on "The Laparelli Valletta Fortifications", Fort Manoel", "Defences of the Grand Harbour in the 16th Century", and "The Coastal Defences of Malta".

In 1979 also, an exhibition was mounted at the Catholic Institute Library on "The Confraternities of the Maltese Islands". Here one must thank Mr. Guido Lanfranco who was the driving force behind this venture. It was officially opened by Sir Hannibal Scicluna and blessed by the Emeritus Archbishop, Mgr. M. Gonzi. Mgr. J. Mercieca, Metropolitan Archbishop, also attended. The success of this exhibition is attested by the great number of people who visited it and commented very favourably both on its contents and its lay-out.

For the future, it has been decided by the outgoing committee that the Week of Historical Studies is to be an annual event. It is also envisaged to hold lectures throughout the year on subjects which need not be original but which will help to diffuse the knowledge of local history.

In 1978, our Society unfortunately lost the services, through death, of its founder and president, Mgr. A. Bonnici and of Prof J. Galea, vice-President for many years. The services of other members were also lost for the same reason but it is heartening to note that, in these four years, there were 158 new enrolments. Unfortunately, some members still persist in not paying their membership fee mainly through negligence and so the Committee was forced to decide not to send defaulting members their annual copy of *Melita Historica*. Happily, a circular by the Treasurer had the desired effect and showed that all members do have the Society at heart, even if they are negligent at times.

Every year, we organise an annual dinner which, though usually well-attended, should attract more members and their guests. This is the only social activity we usually organise and so it is expected that more members should avail themselves of this opportunity to meet informally and get to know each other more.

Joseph F. Grima
(Hon. Secretary)

Committee for 1979:

<i>President:</i>	Rev. Mgr. V. Borg
<i>Vice-President:</i>	Rev. Prof. A. P. Vella O.P.
<i>Honorary Secretary:</i>	J. F. Grima
<i>Assistant Secretary:</i>	W. L. Zammit
<i>Honorary Treasurer:</i>	C. Galea Scannura
<i>Editor:</i>	Dr. G. Wettinger
<i>Sub-Editor:</i>	Dr. G. Mangion
<i>Members:</i>	Dr. A. Ganado, Dr. A. Bonanno, G. Lanfranco and J. Cannataci.

The Editorial Board for *Melita Historica* is composed of the Editor, the sub-editor, the Secretary and the Treasurer *ex-officio* and Mgr. V. Borg and Dr. A. Ganado.

Deceased Members 1976-79

Bonnici, Mgr Prof. Arturo, Founder and President (1978)
 Brincat, Rev. Canon Treas. Jerome (1979)
 Cassar Torreggiani, Mr. A (1978)
 Coleiro, Prof. C. (1979)
 Cutajar, Mr. Luret (1978)
 Galea, Prof. Guzè (1978)
 Ganado, Dr. Herbert (1979)